

The book cover features a man with light brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a grey button-down shirt that is open at the chest. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. In the background, a Ferris wheel is visible against a deep blue sky. The title 'WAGER of SEDUCTION' is written in large, white, bold letters with a blue outline, and the author's name 'Layla Chase' is in the top left corner in white, bold letters.

**Layla  
Chase**

**WAGER of  
SEDUCTION**

## WAGER OF SEDUCTION

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“Because I’ve missed you, Kyra.”

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ALSO BY LAYLA CHASE

*Love For Hire*  
*Risqué Behavior*  
*Stagecoach Capture*

# WAGER OF SEDUCTION

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BY

LAYLA CHASE

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WAGER OF SEDUCTION  
AN AMBER HEAT BOOK

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*Thanks to my Mt. Helicon Muses,  
who provide constant support on my writing path.*

# CHAPTER 1

“I’m sorry, sir, but Ms. Whittaker is doing field research this afternoon.” The tight-lipped secretary held her pen poised over a lined notepad. “May I leave her a message?”

Years had passed since he’d seen Kyra Whittaker. Now that he’d made the trip back to their Ohio hometown, Brady Keegan didn’t want to wait. “So that *was* her pretty blonde head I saw ducking into an SUV across the parking lot.” Adopting his most cajoling smile, he leaned a hand on the edge of the secretary’s desk.

“Yes, she and her colleague did just leave.” A wrinkle creased the skin between her thin eyebrows. “The timing was unfortunate if you just missed her.”

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Brady glanced at the brass nameplate propped on the desktop. “Shirley, I’m a high school friend of Kyra’s, and I’m in town for a short visit. Any chance of catching up to her at the research site?”

“I’m not sure.” The pen tapped against the desktop, and Shirley cast her gaze around her desktop. “I don’t know if I should give out...”

Brady pushed down his rising frustration at the wait. “You’re being a great secretary—screening her appointments and being circumspect with information. Let me reassure you about who I am. Her older brother Trent and I were best friends, even played football together, at Truman High. I escorted Kyra to her senior prom.” A pang tightened in his gut at saying those words. That particular night was not one of his more stellar moments. In fact, his actions that night were a big part of why he wanted to see her.

He widened his smile and waited, knowing he could probably outwait this efficient administrative aide. But Kyra had already left the premises, and he needed his answer now. “Did her mother head up the Junior League’s charity ball again this year?”

Shirley’s eyes lit with surprise and she shook her head. “Not the ball, but the silent art auction.” Her fingers fidgeted with papers on the desk. “Well, since you do seem to know the Whittaker family, I don’t suppose there’s any harm in telling you she and Paul headed off to Playland, the amusement park. Why don’t I give her a jingle and let her know to look for you?”



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Brady tensed, debating if he should stop her. Surprising Kyra was something he'd been looking forward to since his arrival in town. His gaze cut to the phone and watched as numbers appeared in the display window. As soon as the seventh one registered, he reached over and tapped the disconnect button. "On second thought, I want to surprise her. An old boyfriend is probably the last person she'll expect to see at such an unlikely place."

"An old beau? Won't that be nice?" A sigh escaped, and Shirley leaned an elbow on her desk and rested her chin on her palm. "This latest project has them gallivanting off to the strangest places during the day."

\* \* \*

Brady moved quickly through the families and young couples meandering through Playland. He looked everywhere for the sight of Kyra's blonde hair and the pink blouse he'd glimpsed as she got in the truck. On the drive over, a plan had hatched, and he was eager to catch sight of her before she spotted him. The element of surprise was what he needed. After only a few more minutes of conversation with the secretary, he'd learned what Kyra was up to. The twenty-minute drive had allowed him needed time to cool off—and then to plot a test.

How far she was willing to go, he didn't know. But he intended to find out. To his left, the Ferris wheel spun and he heard a familiar laugh. He tracked the basket's progress as it inched higher on its ascent, loading passengers, until he

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spotted her blonde head. Gaze fixed on their entangled clinch, he tensed, a long-forgotten protective urge rising.

Although he'd initially doubted Shirley's assessment, he couldn't deny what he was seeing. He reached for his cell phone and punched in Kyra's number from memory. After the phone connected, he watched her straighten, reach toward the bottom of the metal basket and then hook a hands-free unit over her ear.

"Kyra Whittaker here."

"Hello, Kyra."

A gasp sounded. "Brady Keegan? Is that you? How did you get this number?"

A swell of pride settled in his chest that she'd immediately recognized his voice. "Doesn't matter. I learned what you're planning and I wanted to watch."

"You're here?" Her head swiveled, blonde hair flipping over her shoulder. "In Playland? Where?"

On reflex, he edged back, deeper into the shadow of a sprawling oak tree. "You won't find me, but know this, I can see you."

"Why are you here? Back in Oak Knoll?"

"Weren't you listening? I want you to know that I'm watching every move you make, that I intend to enjoy every inch of skin you'll be exposing." The mixture of anger and excitement hardened his cock. He shifted, widening his stance against the constricting fabric of his trousers.

"You know what we're doing here, and you want to watch?"

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“Have to, babe.” He watched her slump back in the seat. “I wasn’t invited to participate.”

“Still arrogant as hell, I see.”

A surprised laugh escaped his lips. “Ah, the girl has some sass. That’s new.”

“Did you call just to harass me? If so, I’m ending this call.”

“Don’t do that, Kyra. I want to inspire you.”

“What?” Her breath whooshed out.

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breast to her waist and back up. Blood pumped through his body, echoing in his eardrums. Yes, he still had a chance.

“Both hands. Cup the weight of your breasts and flick your thumbs over the nipples.” If only he’d arrived at the park five minutes earlier. He’d have flattened this jerk Paul for the chance to be sitting beside her on the ride.

The sight of Kyra following his instructions enflamed him, and his balls tightened in a delicious clench. “Imagine they’re my hands and I’m caressing your curves.” Watching her hands move over her breasts rocked him. He jammed his free hand into his slacks’ pocket, unable to resist running a fingertip back and forth over the base of his cock.

With head tilted to one side, Kyra traced her ribs and stomach.

Brady wished he stood closer and could see what expression her hazel eyes held. Did they still take on a dreamy glaze upon her arousal?

Then Paul got into the action, kissing her neck and grabbing her breast.

At the sight of another man’s hands touching Kyra, Brady gritted his teeth, his breath caught in his throat. With a snap, he closed the phone and turned away, leaning a hand on the oak tree. No part of him wanted to hear any sound or watch any movement of the remainder of her intended research.

He blew out an angry breath. What had he imagined would happen when he reappeared in her life? At best, he’d hoped for a chance to apologize for his arrogant behavior. At worse, he’d dreaded her refusal to see him.

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The scenario of watching another man make love to her had never crossed his thoughts.

He fisted his hands and swung back around to face the Ferris wheel, flipping open his phone as he moved. *Oh, crap!* The scene before him stopped his action.

Across the expanse, two uniformed park security officers were escorting Kyra and Paul off the Ferris wheel. The group marched off in the opposite direction, Kyra's head ducked into her chest. Guilt settled in his chest and he slumped back against the tree.

Definitely not the best way to get back in her good graces.

\* \* \*

4:19 P.M

The odor of stale institutional cleaners tainted the air in the police interrogation room. Kyra Whittaker strode six steps across the scuffed linoleum to the gunmetal gray wall, pivoted and glared at the round clock above the door.

Brady Keegan was back in town. The man she swore she never wanted to see again in this lifetime. The same man whose throaty voice made her nipples tighten into nubs and her womb clench with desire. She shook her head at the unscientific analysis of the maelstrom of emotion he'd caused in only a few minutes of conversation. And on a phone line, of all things.

\* \* \*

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4:20 P.M.

Enough of the distraction that had put her into this very predicament. She had to get back to her lab. So much work remained that couldn't be completed while she was held here. The knots in her stomach twisted, and she groaned, a hand pressed to her waist.

The tall female guard assigned to watch her stepped forward. A frown darkened her eyes and deepened the lines of disapproval around her mouth. "You're not gonna be sick, are you?"

"No, I'm okay." Kyra waved her hand in dismissal. *Yeah, right!* As if her life would be okay anytime soon. She could not believe how deeply Brady's voice had affected her. Or how carried away she'd gotten at following his sensual suggestions.

What words could she use to explain to Howard Keegan—a man who hadn't missed her parents' Super Bowl party in ten years—that she'd been arrested for lewd and lascivious behavior? That was a conversation she wished she could avoid.

With a shake of her head, she wrapped both arms around her aching stomach and resumed pacing. *Hopeless.* Her situation was absolutely hopeless. After this setback, she and Paul would never get the experiential data necessary to meet the grant proposal deadline. She wondered if he was in a nearby room being questioned at this very moment.

Maybe the parameters of the experiment had been too

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loose. Definitely Brady Keegan's appearance introduced a wild card. One she'd never have factored in the equation...

"You'd better sit and relax." The officer settled a bony shoulder next to the large mirror covering half the wall. "No telling how long the detective might be. Could be hours."

"Hours?" Kyra raised a hand to the sudden throbbing in her temple. *Not now...* She couldn't spare the time for a headache. "I've got reports to finish, experiments to write up. My role at the lab is essential."

"A consideration to be made," a deep male voice interrupted, "before you thumb your nose at this city's laws."

Kyra whirled toward the too-familiar voice, one that sounded as smooth as molasses. The one that had pushed her experimentation past all previous limits and gotten her hauled into jail. At the sight of the tall, dark-haired man, she felt her breath catch in her throat. *Brady Keegan.*

The man filled the doorway, hands anchored on lean hips and a smug grin stretching his too-sexy lips. A dove-gray silky shirt and charcoal slacks clothed his athletic frame.

God, he was still such a hunk. Even after all these years. The memory of what had transpired within the past hour surfaced and her cheeks heated. She swallowed hard against a suddenly dry throat. "You! You're the reason I'm here."

He raised an eyebrow and planted his hands on his hips. "What happened to 'Hello, Brady, nice to see you after, what, six or seven years'?"

"Nine." *Oh, crap!* The minute the word was uttered, she regretted her correction. No reason to let on that her most

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embarrassing night ever—the night of her senior prom—still haunted her. At least, haunted her memories of this too-enticing man. He'd been dead-on right about that.

A broad wink lessened the impact of his ice-blue gaze. “Keeping track, Ky-ky?”

Irritation stiffened her spine and she squared her stance. His pet name for her didn't lessen her attitude. The vulnerability of getting so turned on at Playland could be buried under bravado. “More like counting my blessings since the day you left Oak Knoll.”

Palms held up in appeal, he turned toward the officer and spoke from the side of his mouth. “Wouldn't you expect her to be nicer to the man who just arranged her release?”

The guard shook her head and tsked-tsked, dark eyes flashing with stifled mirth.

“Release?” She was free? Kyra crossed the room in three strides and latched onto his forearm, which immediately tensed. The sensation of corded muscles rippling beneath her fingers almost distracted her. She narrowed her gaze and searched his face. “Your father sent you?”

“Let's say, we've been in communication. That's how I learned the extent of your...” He edged close, cupped a hand beside his mouth and whispered, “indiscretion?”

Her skin flushed, and she caught herself leaning a few inches closer for a deeper breath of his tantalizing scent. The cologne was different, more spice than musk, but her traitorous body still responded to the underlying maleness that had always been Brady. Realizing what her body revealed



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about her reaction, she released his arm and stepped back. "How can you call it that? Especially since you're partially responsible."

He chuckled and crossed his arms over his chest. "Okay, Kyra, how do I label your actions?"

The memory of the state of undress which she and Paul had reached flashed through her mind. Who would have filed the complaint? The onlookers had only gotten a few glimpses and had probably exaggerated what they saw. Her thoughts went to the original purpose of the team's actions. "A scientific experiment regarding the sociological response to varying levels of intimacy in public settings."

He shook his head. "Too many words."

The dismissive tone of his statement irked her. "Oooh, and such big ones, too."

"Ouch. The sweet kitten has grown fangs." His mouth set into a wide smile, he turned to the officer. "Could Ms. Whittaker and I talk in private, please?"

"Attorney-client stuff, right?" The officer's gaze flicked between the two of them before shoving off the wall. "I'll be posted right outside the door until I see the signed release papers."

Brady held open the door as she walked past and flashed another of his famous winning smiles. "We appreciate this." After the latch clicked, he leaned back against the door, gaze narrowed and jaw clenched. "Now, Kyra, what the hell is going on?"

"I told you. A scientific—" The man across from her

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sobered into a stranger.

“Cut the technical crap. Tell me why you and some nimrod named Paul went to Playland for a make-out session at the top of the Ferris wheel.” His gaze turned steely, ice blue clouding to gray as he zeroed in on her face. “I know the reason you ended up half-naked.”

That stare was formidable, and her self doubts resurfaced. Responding to his demands had been foolish—exhilarating, sexy and daring. But, all the same, foolish. She looked around the interview room, touching her gaze on each item in the Spartan room—anywhere but at this intimidating male. “Half-naked is such an exaggeration.” Nervous energy flowed through her limbs, and she sighted a new path for pacing.

“Kyra Alyssum Whittaker.”

At the sound of her full name spoken with low-toned determination, she fisted her hands and pressed her lips together. Of all people, Brady Keegan was the last man with whom she wanted to discuss today’s disastrous event. He had some nerve, especially after the wanton behavior in which he’d encouraged her to indulge. Those exciting and sexy moves she’d acted out for him. She sucked in a breath and turned to confront him, spotting her reflection in the mirror.

What a sight! The woman who faced her looked nothing like the in-control scientist who’d left the university lab not five hours earlier. Her ecru blouse was buttoned crooked and one tail hung untucked from her taupe skirt. Strands of wavy blonde hair outlining her face made her look wild, wanton. With quick movements, she gathered her shoulder-length hair

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into a knot and re-secured it with the butterfly clip. She angled her head to each side, checking for stray tendrils.

*The mirror!* Her hands stilled. Were police officers sitting on the other side, watching with bored expressions as she repaired her appearance?

“Kyra, I need to know—”

Her gaze caught his in the mirror, and, narrowing her eyes, she gave her head a quick shake. “Not here.”

“Quit stalling!”

She spun to face him and leaned a hip against the mirror. “I’m wasting time here.” With a tilting of her head, she rolled her eyes toward the mirror, hoping to send him a signal about what she’d just realized. “I’m losing valuable research time. If I’m free, then I want to leave. Now.”

A frown creasing his brows, Brady shook his head. “Kyra, Howard is expecting me to get details about what happened.”

With a fleeting glance at her mirrored reflection, she moved close and raised a hand to his muscled chest, forcing all the imploring she could summon into her gaze. “I’ll tell you, I promise. But not here.” Her hand heated instantly, and she resisted sweeping her fingers in a caressing arc.

His body tensed and then he wrapped a strong hand around her elbow. “Okay, let’s go.”

## CHAPTER 2

The drive from the police station to the building of his father's law offices, Keegan, MacGregor, and Ryan, dragged. Streetlights along Poplar Avenue blinked on as they traveled through what he guessed amounted to rush hour traffic in his old hometown. Nothing like the honking taxis and daredevil drivers of his beloved Chicago.

Brady rubbed a thumb on the leather-covered steering wheel. Every ounce of his concentration was focused on reining in the possessiveness that had grabbed his chest the moment he'd read the police report. Forget the fact he'd had to drop the name of his parents' neighbor, Judge Crawford, to read the report Kyra's colleague had dictated.

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But that hadn't stopped him.

From the moment his father's receptionist had shared where Kyra worked, Brady's body went on high alert. An alert that notched upward when he'd decided to meet with her and revved even higher when he learned about her field research. He'd known then this showdown was coming—and relished that fact.

Her beauty had ripened over the years. Blonde hair that glistened with a just-washed shine, hazel eyes that spoke of hidden secrets, and a body that hinted at a fantastic shape under loose-fitting clothing.

Jealousy was not an attractive trait and one he'd never experienced until reading the words, Female suspect found in state of undress as follows: blouse unbuttoned and opened to expose shoulders, chest and stomach, brassiere of white lace intact, fully clothed from waist down. Witness C reported seeing male suspect's hand on female's ribs and stomach.

He hadn't counted on lust hitting him in the pit of his stomach and traveling south the instant he'd seen her across the parking lot at the lab. Or had he intended to goad her into acts that carried such consequences?

The girl who'd been too innocent for him to touch nine years earlier had certainly changed. At this moment, he didn't trust himself not to reach for her sweet body. Better keep his hands gripped tight on the steering wheel.

As if waking from a trance, Kyra peered out the side window and edged forward to glance at her surroundings. She turned and leaned close. "Where are you taking me?"

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The scent of peaches filled the space between them, and he inhaled. “Howard’s office.”

Her body stiffened, and she gasped, grabbing his forearm. “I can’t face your father tonight.”

Gritting his teeth against the sensation of her touch, Brady pulled into a parking space marked with the company logo and shut off the engine. “Won’t be a problem. He’s meeting Mom for cocktails at the country club.”

Kyra slumped against the seat. “Good.”

“Let’s go inside so you can explain this mess.” He moved around the car and helped her out and then escorted her into the building. At the entrance, he keyed in the security code Howard had given him to unlock the door. Guiding her through the hallways with a hand grazing her lower back was delicious torture. Within minutes, they entered the law firm’s penthouse office, and he flipped on the lights.

Soft spotlights emphasized the dark wood and burgundy velveteen of the reception-area chairs. Leafy scheffleria plants swayed in the breeze of the air conditioner.

She gazed around with a wide-eyed expression. “I’ve never been to your dad’s office. This is a great waiting room.” Her voice squeaked. “Are those prints or originals?”

With a quick glance between her and the quality furnishings he took for granted, he debated if her strange behavior meant she was going into shock. “I really don’t care about that, Kyra.” He steered her down a long carpeted hallway to an office, swung open the door and flipped on the lights. “We’ll be comfortable in here. Can I get you something

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to drink before we start our talk?”

“Just some water.” She wandered around the room, trailing fingers along the surface of the polished wood desk. “I didn’t think I liked mahogany, but this desk is gorgeous. And those glass-fronted bookcases...I’d love one for my special research volumes.”

He watched her fingers trace along the smooth surface and his body itched, wishing for a similar touch. *Not good.* Tonight he couldn’t be ruled by his body. “Great. I’ll be right back.” For a moment, he could only stare. Didn’t she realize the seriousness of the arrest?

With a shake of his head, he crossed to the wet bar and leaned his hands on the counter. To the count of three, he let his head drop, then rolled his shoulders. Frustration fueled his movements and he knew better than to confront her this minute. Emotion would not help their already shaky situation.

When the tension eased, he removed his jacket and grabbed two plastic bottles from the mini-refrigerator. Tossing on a smile, Brady crossed the room to hand her one. “Please sit and we can get started.”

Her gaze connected with his, shifted to the available seating of a small couch and two armchairs and then skittered away. “I’d rather stand. Thanks.”

He eased himself onto the leather couch and crossed an ankle over the opposite knee. At least, he could make sure his face appeared calm. “Okay, I’m listening.”

Kyra moved close to the window, her back toward the room. “What a gorgeous view!”

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Her lithe movements pulled his gaze like a beacon. Silhouetted against a purple sky shading to pink near the horizon, the woman was lovely. The long years away hadn't changed one basic fact.

He still wanted her.

Every sense was attuned to her too-rapid breathing, her nervous movements, her light fruity perfume.

Unable to stop himself, he let his gaze linger over the length of her slender body. Squared shoulders angling to a narrow waist that flared to rounded hips. Her skirt grazed lean, athletic thighs and exposed the back of her toned knees. Shapely calves tapered to trim ankles...

"Kyra."

She glanced over her shoulder, a frown pulling at her mouth.

*Her sweet mouth.* He clenched his jaw and fought to keep his thoughts on the problem that had brought them to his father's law office. "You wouldn't talk at the police station." He spread his arms wide. "Here, we have total privacy. So talk."

Her body stiffened and she turned to face him, hands framing her waist. "These details are necessary for my defense?"

Concerned his voice might give away his building frustration, he simply nodded.

She bit the corner of her lower lip. "You have to know everything?"

The movement of white teeth drawing on her pink lip



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aroused him, and he breathed deeply to settle his thoughts.

Here was the opportunity to come clean and tell her he didn't work for his father's firm. That he'd arranged her release from the police station for purely personal reasons. Maybe he couldn't speak about what was needed for her defense, but he definitely had a need to know. He swallowed against a dry throat. "Essential."

"This is so embarrassing." She moved away from the window and dropped into an armchair facing the couch, leaning elbows on her thighs. "My current grant at the institute has funding only through this academic year. Paul and I were conducting preliminary research so we could apply for a new one."

At her mention of the other man's name, Brady's pulse spiked. "Who is Paul? Why was he there this afternoon?"

"The lab assistant with the longest tenure."

*Hang around the lab long enough and you get to disrobe the boss?* Those were the words he'd heard, but probably weren't what she'd said. Focusing his thoughts, he settled deeper into the cushion and crossed his arms. "Meaning?"

"What?" She crossed one leg over the other, bouncing a foot. "Are you insinuating something?"

Irritation at her evasion ran through him. Too much time had passed since they'd been together for him to know if her actions were deliberate. "Tell me exactly what you were doing. You mentioned conducting research?"

"We were gathering primary data, and that's all we were doing." She held his gaze for a couple seconds and then

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looked away.

He'd bet guilt made her drop her gaze. That gesture, added to her stiff posture, with arms wrapped around her middle. Classic defensive moves. "Go on."

Her eyebrows drew together and her gaze ran over his posture. "Shouldn't you be writing this down? You know, for when you report the details of my case to your father later."

*Oh, right.* A lawyer probably would be making notes on one of those long yellow pads. He pushed himself to his feet and strode to the massive desk set diagonally against the bank of windows. Among a stack of thick folders was a writing tablet. Brady grabbed it and a pen from the desk drawer, then returned to the couch. "Okay, I'm writing 'conducting research.' What else?"

Slim hands smoothed the front of her skirt. "How much detail do you need?"

*Everything!* Damn it, he wanted to hear it all. From the moment the two of them got into the car at the laboratory until they arrived at Playland. And especially he wanted to hear why she'd gone there intending to let some other man put his hands all over her sweet body.

Could she have a streak of exhibitionism? *Interesting thought.*

"You describe what happened, and I'll make notes of what I feel is important."

With a sigh, she turned her head to look out the window. "Well, the theory we're trying to prove is that people don't truly see what is right in front of them. The next step was an

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evaluation of the topic, you know, to see if it was worth researching. I wanted to test if people would intervene in a heated argument.”

With a raised eyebrow, she connected with his gaze. “You know, do you knock on the door when your neighbors raise the roof on a Saturday night?” A shoulder lifted and then dropped. “Paul convinced me engaging in...”

A tightness grew in his chest at the word “convinced.” Had the jerk forced her into doing something against her will?

“Excuse me.” He stared at the writing pad as if finding a particular word in a series of notes. No sense in inflaming the issue. “Define ‘convinced.’ Was there force involved?”

“No.” She shook her head and cleared her throat before continuing. “We’re colleagues—scientists. We debate subjects and theories. His argument was stronger than mine. He said research on displays of affection in public had a better chance of receiving a grant.” She raised a hand and pointed in his direction. “Don’t give me that skeptical look. You’d be surprised at the subjects of projects that receive funding.”

“I’ll bet.” His fingers clenched the pen, and he fought against the images her words created.

Her gaze met his for a second and then skittered away. “So, that’s what we did.”

“What is involved in these...” He made a show of holding up the pad to check his notes. “These displays of affection?”

Kyra fidgeted in her chair and picked at the label on the water bottle. “You know, hugging and kissing and stuff.”

His pen rested on the pad. “Is ‘stuff’ a scientific word?”

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Her cheeks flushed pink. "Can't you be a bit more sympathetic? Telling you this..." She waved her hand in the air. "I mean, relating what I did is hard." Her gaze lifted to meet his and then flitted away. "Especially after how this ended."

This opportunity was too good to pass up, but he had to use caution. The old Brady had never been shy about pressing his advantage, which had scared off Kyra the first time. The first part of his plan to make her come to him hadn't gone as smoothly as he hoped.

"Maybe showing me would be easier." He stood and dropped the pad on the nearby end table, adjusting his stance to appear casual. "How were you standing?"

She set down her bottle and rose, hands smoothing the wrinkles at the front of her skirt. "You mean today?"

His gaze followed the path of her hands, wondering if her muscles were as tight as they looked. "Today?" He moved a step closer and then stopped, breathing slowly through his nose. "You've been arrested before?"

"We never got arrested, but we experimented at Galleria Mall and the art museum over in Leland."

Two other times she'd gotten almost naked with this jerk! A guy whose future was looking dimmer by the second. "For God's sake, Kyra." The words flew out before he thought about their impact.

Her hands fisted, and her chin jutted toward him. "How can you act like that? This is for science."

Anger only heightened her beauty. Awareness tightened

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his groin, and he forced himself to draw several breaths. "You're right." He held his arms loosely in front of his body. "Position my body like Paul's was."

"Today we were seated. Remember, on the Ferris wheel." Her gaze narrowed, but she inched forward. "You said you were there, right?"

"I was." Probably a real lawyer would have remembered that fact. He dropped his arms and stepped back. "Let's move to the couch."

With long strides, she crossed the floor and sat, tugging down the hem of her skirt and peeking from below her lashes.

He stepped close and paused, stopped by her sudden nervousness. Lowering himself to the couch, he wondered at her actions. The woman practically stripped in public—on three separate occasions—and enacted his erotic suggestions, but was skittish about sitting beside him fully clothed?

"Tell me where my arm—where *his* arm was. From where I stood, I couldn't see everything."

She angled her knees toward him. "He started with his arm around my shoulders."

Brady eased closer and placed his arm as she described. "Like this?" The fresh scent of peaches intensified, making him think of summer. That particular summer and the night of her prom. In a long history of high school dates, that night had not been his crowning glory. Instead of accepting her starry-eyed adoration for the simplicity it was, he'd pushed his advantage, pressing for another sexual conquest.

"Lower." Kyra snuggled against his chest, grabbed his

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other hand and tugged it toward her breast.

For once, he fought his natural inclination to follow through on the move and close his hand around her generous mound. "Wait."

She turned her head, and her nose hit his chin. "This afternoon wasn't a date, Brady. No seduction was involved here." A surprised laugh sounded. "In fact, your words served as the foreplay. When Paul saw my response to your words, he jumped into the process. We moved right to, um..." She ducked her head, a flush creeping into her cheeks.

At her admission about reacting to his words, his body stilled. He leaned back, trying to see her face. "Whoa, Kyra. How can you go out in public and almost get naked with this guy, if you can't even tell me what you did?"

"I didn't get naked." Her body shifted slightly away. "And maybe because this isn't the same."

He hooked a finger under her chin and lifted until he could see her eyes. Her beautiful amber-colored eyes. "What do you mean?"

Guilt tightened her features, and she looked frantically around the room. "Um, this room is too personal. That golfing trophy on the shelf reminds me of my dad. I'll bet that frame on the desk contains a picture of your mom." She laid a hand on Brady's chest and gazed into his eyes. "I'm sorry, but sitting here, this close to you, I can't get into a clinical mood like with an experiment with Paul."

Brady was lost. His chest heated under her hand, making him aware of every square inch where their bodies touched.

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He wanted her. Tonight. “Use the big words. Maybe that’ll help.”

Her brows wrinkled and then a smile spread across her lips and lit up her eyes. “Okay, we started with predetermined, set-up positions. First stage: male massages female’s right breast, while kissing her jaw and neck.”

“Like this?” He grazed his lips along her cheek and traced a path at the edge of her blouse, down her chest and cupped her breast. *Soft, warm, pliable.* His fingertips brushed the nipple and her skin tightened. He remembered the details from the report he’d read and tried to picture the lacy bra she wore beneath her clothes.

For just a moment, Kyra arched into his hand and sighed. “Yes.” She turned her head and pressed hot, nibbling kisses the length of his jaw. Her nose nuzzled his neck. Then she stilled and sat upright, pulling her skirt down her thighs. “I don’t think this is a good idea. The report I gave the police was thorough enough.”

His palm heated from being filled by her luscious breast. “Your report gave the basics, but more important is how these actions looked to the witnesses.” Brady eased her back into his arms, unwilling to let this opportunity get away. He’d thought of her often over the years and always regretted that night when he’d pushed her too fast.

But not tonight. He was in control and refused to scare her again. The show she’d put on at Playland gave him all the incentive he needed to pursue what was between them. “That can’t be determined from a cold, detached report. Show me, I

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mean, demonstrate what you did to Pa—to the male subject.”

After a tentative start, Kyra unbuttoned his shirt and pressed hot lips to his fevered skin. Her gaze sought his between kisses, as if waiting for a signal to stop.

The feel of her lips pressed against his chest set his heart racing. Brady shifted a leg to relieve the pressure of his hardening erection and dropped his arm from her shoulders. What he really wanted to do was rip off her blouse and sink himself—

He inhaled sharply. No, that’s where he’d made his mistake before. Last time was too fast...this time he was determined to take his time. He had to watch for her reactions, but more importantly, he had to take his time.

Oh, yes, tonight would definitely be better...for both of them.



## CHAPTER 3

Surrounded by Brady's warmth and his spicy scent, Kyra's thoughts whirled out of her control. Was she truly within the circle of Brady Keegan's arms and giving him instructions on how to intimately touch her body? A scene she'd envisioned over the years, but never believed would possibly happen.

*A sexual fantasy come true.*

She pressed her lips against his neck and ran her fingers down his chest, caressing the contrasting textures of smooth muscles and crisp hair.

He sucked in a breath and groaned, low and seductive, his hips shifting on the couch.

When she glanced up, she saw only dark desire, the

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guarded look now gone from his eyes. A shiver ran through her insides, and her pussy dampened in anticipation. She squirmed and pressed her thighs together at her advanced reaction for this early stage of foreplay.

Could he want this as much as she did? Could she believe what he'd said on the phone? She inched her lips down his chest and trailed kisses to his nipple buried within chest hair. Using the tip of her tongue, she flicked a circle around the dimpled disc and enjoyed the texturing of his hardening nub.

Brady's hands cupped her shoulders and eased her away from his chest. "You kissed him exactly like that?"

With effort, Kyra blinked to bring his face back into focus. The blood thumping in her ears had dulled her hearing. *What had he asked?* "Um, not exactly."

The corner of Brady's mouth quirked up and then straightened. "I need clarification. One report detailed his actions on you, but mentioned nothing about yours on him. Another witness only related your movements as you touched your body."

Damn, she'd gone too far. Where was her normal clinical mindset when she needed it? She licked her lips. Brady's spicy taste was there, in her mouth, etching a mark on her soul. "I don't think I moved that far down the chest with Paul. And I don't remember using my tongue." She straightened and immediately missed the warmth as his hands fell away. "But that's interesting. I'll have to remember factoring in variables about eyewitness gender. Do you remember if the person was male or female?"

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“Didn’t notice.” Brady fell back and rested his head against the sofa. “I only know what I read. You were half-naked.”

Her mind raced. True, a greater percentage of her upper body—neck, shoulders, chest—had been exposed. “But Paul’s shirt was unbuttoned to the waist. Was that in the report?”

Brady shook his head. “Not that I saw.”

This could be a new angle. She drew in a deep breath and turned toward Brady. “Maybe the reason is because women aren’t perceived as sexual threats.”

Brady lifted his head and glanced down at his crotch, where his trousers tented from the pressure of his lengthening shaft. “Tell that to my cock, Kyra. Because you’re threatening the devil into it.”

Her gaze trailed down the blue shirt that covered what had felt like a tight stomach and stopped on an impressive ridge straining at the fly of his slacks. The air whooshed from her lungs. “Oh! All that with only kisses?” Excitement rose in her chest, and she bit her lower lip.

“With your kisses, and your hands, and especially with that nibbling thing you just did with your mouth.” His hand rested on her thigh, and a thumb swept slow arcs toward her hip.

Her skin heated instantly at his touch, and she struggled to put her thoughts into words. “But men’s reactions are so physically obvious, which is why they are perceived as threatening.”

“Not much to be done about that. We have to get ‘obvious’ for the process to work.”

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“That’s just biology. I’m talking about the control aspect.” She tapped a finger to her chin as her thoughts again ran over the scene, focusing on the sequence of actions. “I’ll bet that witness thought I was being taken advantage of.”

Brady stiffened. “Were you?”

The tension was back in his voice, but Kyra barely noticed. This new avenue of speculation intrigued her. “Of course not. We had the whole encounter broken down into steps with an agreed-upon stopping point.”

“Which was what?”

Maybe the steps should be rearranged so Paul’s shirt was removed sooner. Oh, where was her notebook when she needed it?

“Kyra.”

She flinched at his curt tone and connected with an ice-blue glare. “What did you say?”

His jaw clenched. “What was the stopping place?”

She looked away and spotted the writing pad lay on the table only a few feet away. Perfect, she could jot down these new thoughts. “Oh, it was hands to genitals. That would have been too rude. Excuse me.” She stretched an arm across Brady at the same moment he started to jump to his feet.

“I can’t believe you—” He grabbed her waist and hauled her against his body.

She landed on him, her chest against his stomach, with his engorged penis pressing against the side of her right breast. Oooh, was the man endowed. Her arm dropped into the V of his spread legs, and the length of his rigid cock heated her

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sensitive skin. Heat swirled in her belly, and she swore she felt her womb clench.

Odd, there'd been no mention of that sensation in her textbooks.

His hips bucked, and a growl erupted from his chest. He braced his hands on the edge of the couch and raised his hips slowly, pressing his cock against her arm. "Lady, you're killing me."

*Killing him!* Every inch where his body pressed against hers tingled with delicious anticipation. If the man felt that good with his clothes on, how would he feel naked?

A part of her brain still worked on the basic question. She pulled her left hand up to his ribs and rested her cheek on it, staring at the underside of his jaw. Even from this angle, the man looked sexy. "What you just did could be viewed as aggression."

He cocked his head and slitted open one eye. "Hardly."

"Our perceptions differ." Her lips flattened in annoyance.

"Rubbing your arm was pure instinct, not aggressive."

"But that's my point." Irritated at his denial, she turned her head and rested her chin on a fist. "I bet you couldn't be totally submissive with a woman if you tried."

He leaned forward and rolled her to her side. Speculation gleamed in his gaze, and a grin tugged at his lips. "What's the wager?"

A heady rush filled her head. Had she really just propositioned Brady Keegan? Dared him to let her have her way with him? Based on his controlling actions of the past few

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hours, she figured he'd cave before they both removed all their clothing. "If you succeed, you name your prize."

"Normally, I admire confidence. But I'm warning you, Kyra, I intend to win."

His husky words skittered along her skin and pebbled her nipples. She loved a challenge, especially ones based in science. Her advantage was having all the facts, down to the minutest detail, about how Brady's body worked. This would be just another experiment.

\* \* \*

Brady watched her hazel eyes flash with superiority. The minx didn't realize the strength of his resolve. He scooted lower on the couch, toed off his shoes, and waited for her first move. Tonight, he'd use every type of distraction he'd ever learned—mentally recite baseball statistics, match capitals and states, or do multiplication tables—anything to prevent him from wresting control from Kyra.

Too much was at stake for him to lose. Years earlier, she'd been too young and had run from his sexual hunger. He hadn't been granted this second chance to taste Kyra's passion only to act carelessly. *Not again.*

Kyra slid off the couch and knelt at his side, her hand stroking his leg from hip to knee. She stared at the bulging front of his trousers, and a sly smile spread her lips.

His cock jerked, and he swallowed hard. God, he hoped she wasn't going to start there. If she did, he might lose in the first round.

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Her soft hands ran up inside the cuffs of his trousers and eased off his socks. “You’ll be more comfortable without these.”

“How about if I take off something of yours?”

An eyebrow rose, and she inhaled sharply. “Over so soon?”

He shook his head and forced out a laugh. “Just testing you.”

She stood and walked toward the corner containing the wet bar.

Brady’s gaze fastened on her swaying hips, and heat flowed through his bloodstream. The woman had turned into a sensual tease. He lifted his butt off the couch and eased the pull of his trousers.

With a flick, she switched off the light over the sink and leaned against the counter. “Ah, that’s better. Knowing men are highly affected by the visual, I’ll aid our process by removing a piece of clothing. Based on this afternoon’s experience, I’m guessing you enjoy a bit of voyeurism.”

“What man doesn’t?” Shaded light from the desk lamp and moonlight filtering through the windows cast the office in mysterious shadows. Brady squinted to get a better look at Kyra undoing her blouse, her delicate fingers slowly working the buttons through each hole. One good yank, and he’d have those buttons ricocheting off the walls.

*Breathe in, Keegan. Breathe out.*

She tugged the tails of her blouse from her skirt and shrugged first one shoulder, then the other, until the garment

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slid down her arms. With dainty movements, she picked up the blouse and held it at arm's length before releasing it to drift into a pool of fabric at her feet. Her white lace bra displayed plenty of pale cleavage. Using measured steps, she padded across the carpet and slid onto the leather couch, her knees resting against his thigh. "Now, your shirt. Lean forward."

Trying to ignore her luscious breasts rising over the silky fabric, he did as she instructed, but that put their heads mere inches apart. Sweetness clung to her skin and filled his senses. *Peaches and Kyra*. The scent she'd worn the night they'd attended her school prom. The same one that had filled his memories of her over the years.

As she edged the fabric over his shoulders, her fingers grazed his skin and trailed down his arm.

He jerked at the contact, and goose bumps rose along his over-sensitive skin.

"Sorry, did I scratch you?" Her face was close to his ear, and each word puffed warm breath on his cheek.

Like a flower follows the sun, he inched his head to the side and connected with her gaze. The rightness of being with her, of being intimate after all these years, settled into his chest with welcome warmth, and he grinned. "No, I'm just jumpy."

Her eyes widened, and her lips parted enough to let her rapid breaths escape. "Oh."

How he wanted to kiss her moist lips. Before he could stop himself, he leaned a couple inches toward her and then stilled.



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Distraction...he needed a distraction. His shirt hung at his elbows, and he leaned sideways enough to slide out his arms. With a flick of his wrist, he tossed the garment over his shoulder. Keeping his arms resting on the top of the couch ought to help him remember to keep his hands off.

Tonight, the actions moved at her pace. *No matter what.*

Her gaze lowered to his chest, hazel eyes darkening to tawny brown as one hesitant hand stroked his skin. "The nerves in our skin have receptors that transmit impulses to the cerebral...uh, the pleasure center of the brain. Touch is an important element in foreplay." She looked from under long eyelashes. "But only when the partners know how to stimulate each other's erogenous zones."

He gritted his teeth at her clinical words. Wasn't he more than just another experiment? Because she sure as hell meant more to him than this one night. Nine years ago, he'd been a fool to walk away. These days, he was much smarter and more determined. "Kyra, I'll enjoy any and all ways you want to touch me."

She lowered her head and her searing lips grazed his chest, gently at first, then with more pressure. "Mmm, your skin is softer than I'd have thought." A tentative finger crept up his stomach and circled his nipple.

His fingers tightened on the couch, and he forced his feet flat on the floor. Her playful touches were sending him close to the edge. How could he keep from reacting when she got to the serious stuff?

"And your nipples bud so quickly."

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Was she trying to talk him into a climax? Distraction coming up. *How about them Red Sox?* He tried to remember where his favorite team had placed in the previous year's standings and failed. His brain was on overload from Kyra's caresses.

A raspy breath escaped her lips. "I want...I want the touch of your skin against mine." She straightened and her fingers fumbled with the clasp between her breasts. "Oh, my hands are shaking and I can't work the clasp. Brady, will you undo this...please?" On the last word, her voice cracked.

The vocal giveaway warmed him. She was getting as hot as he was. His gaze took in her flushed cheeks, and he breathed in through his teeth, counting to five. "Not if this counts against me."

With a toss of her head, she huffed out a breath. "The bet is about who's in control. Besides, I'm asking for help."

"Just checking." He eased down his arms and slid his fingers along the soft skin of her chest until he touched the hook. With a simple twist of his fingers, the hook separated and the cups inched apart until the rosy edge of a nipple was exposed. Before he acted on pure male instinct and leaned forward to capture a taste of her sweetness, he stilled and waited for her next move.

With deliberate movements, she peeled the bra from her breasts and shrugged off the straps, setting her breasts into a little jiggle.

At the sight of her shimmy, he couldn't suppress the groan coming from deep in his throat. His chest tightened. "Wow."

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His hands ached to be filled with those pale mounds tipped with berry-colored nipples.

The couch creaked as Kyra scooted sideways, slid her knee over his thigh and straddled it. Her hands pressed on his chest until he leaned against the back of the couch, the leather cool against his heated skin.

Moist lips ran along his jaw, and she whispered into his ear, "This step is further down the list, but somehow the timing seems right." She raised her hands to rest beside his head, then eased her body against his, grazing the tight pearls of her nipples across his chest. A groan whooshed from between her open lips, and her eyelids drifted shut.

Brady fisted his hands to keep from reaching for her. He didn't dare touch her or he'd lose control. But she'd never said he couldn't respond verbally. And he had proof she responded well to his voice. "Damn, Kyra, you feel so good."

Her hands slid down to his neck, and she rubbed her crotch along his leg. "Mmm. I want more." Her words came out in a slur. "How can I get closer?"

Needing to touch her, he leaned a cheek against her hair and rubbed against its silkiness. Maybe she wouldn't notice if he nuzzled her there. "We're still wearing too many clothes."

"You are absolutely right." She straightened and slid off the couch. "Let's take them off."

*At last.*

## CHAPTER 4

Expectation had grabbed hold of his stomach and turned it upside down. At the sight of Kyra shimmying out of her skirt and panties, he launched himself off the couch and grabbed his belt. His movements were hampered by one eye ravaging her well-toned figure and the other struggling to ease the zipper past his straining erection.

“Is there a blanket or a—”

Brady pulled open a door in a cabinet and grabbed a cotton afghan. “Right here.” His voice rasped with need. His knees shook as he stepped out of his trousers and tossed the blanket onto the carpet. Before his legs collapsed from under him, he stretched out on his side and glanced up.

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Amazingly, the woman seemed lost in thought as she touched the tips of her fingers in succession. She stood in a shaft of moonlight that crossed her body from one creamy shoulder to the nest of brown curls at the top of her thighs.

His blood raced in anticipation.

\* \* \*

Kyra shifted her weight from one foot to the other and ticked off the remaining steps on her fingers. Something was out of order. When she'd been with Paul, the pattern had never varied.

"Kyra."

Brady's cajoling voice drew her attention and her gaze. One look at the prime male specimen stretched out on the floor, and she lost track of the prescribed experimental routine. Again. Maybe she should count on her instincts telling her what to do next.

Right now, her womanly inclination told her to lie beside the sexy man on the floor and let her actions be guided by what felt natural.

An idea that went against years of academic study.

But one that could end years of curiosity about this particular man.

The last, emotional thought was irresistible.

She stepped to the blanket and grasped his outstretched hand. With his help, she tucked in close to his body, a fine masculine form that radiated warmth. His hand settled on her hip, and a sigh escaped from deep in her chest.

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His lips nuzzled her forehead. "I agree. This feels right."

*Lips to head.* Allowing someone to touch your head meant trust and was high up on the list. *What step was that?* She reached out a hand to brush away a lock of hair from his forehead, and a strange warmth washed through her senses. This was something she'd never experienced before, and she fought to identify it. Blood rushing to the surface of her skin?

Her mind searched for the name of the chemical or hormone, but all facts had been scrambled. The sensation was hot, wild and primal. Her hand plowed into his hair and cupped his head, pulling down his face. She latched her lips onto his and swept his mouth with a questing tongue.

*Yes!* Her blood sang through her veins, and she had to move. Her hands roamed over his chest, circling his nipples and stroking his tight stomach. She ran her foot along his calf, enjoying the tickle of bristly hair against her toes.

His fingers tightened on her hip, and he lowered his head to the side of her neck. "I have to kiss you, Kyra. You're driving me wild."

A moan grew from deep in her throat. "I feel wild."

He pulled back his head and stared, a grin slowly spreading his lips. "So, there's hope." His fingers trailed down her spine.

By pure reflex, she arched and pressed her breasts harder against his solid chest. She needed to feel him, to touch him...everywhere. Leaning close, she rubbed noses and outlined his lips with her tongue.

Brady closed his mouth over the tip and suckled it. His lips

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held her captive, while his tongue invited her to engage in a lover's joust. His engorged cock pressed against her upper thigh.

Low in her belly, her muscles tightened and dew moistened her curls. This wasn't enough. She rocked her hips to run her mons, slickened by her cream, along his cock.

He stilled, his quickened breaths riffling the hair clinging to her damp neck.

In protest, she moaned and rocked her hips again, pressing harder against his erection. Her body moved as if inhabited by a primitive force she'd never known before.

"Kyra, stop."

With a shrug of her shoulder, she arched backwards and offered a breast, hoping to receive his special touch. "Why?"

"I'm not prepared." He leaned his forehead against hers and kissed the tip of her nose. "Sorry, Ky-Ky, but I don't have a condom."

"What?" She barely held in the scream of frustration that threatened to erupt. "Don't all men carry one in their wallets?"

"When I'm in a relationship, I do." He rolled to his back and raised an arm to his forehead. "Tonight I had plans to enjoy a nice dinner with my parents, not to save your sweet ass from a night in jail."

She drummed her fists on the carpet beside her hips. This could not be happening. She was this close to what she knew would be the best sex—correction, the best lovemaking—of her life. As that thought settled, her heart raced and she felt warmth radiate from her chest. For the first time in a long

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while, she was allowing her emotions to guide her actions. And the feeling was pure exhilaration.

And her heart wouldn't let her be cheated out of this experience. A solution would present itself. She just had to consider all the options. They were in a man's office. She jumped to her feet and dashed off to the bathroom. In a frenzy, she opened wide the cupboard doors and shoved aside cleaners, soap and extra rolls of toilet paper. She yanked on the drawer knob and it slid off the glide, dumping the contents onto the floor.

"Hey, are you all right?" Brady called.

"I'm fine." There amidst a mixture of masculine grooming items lay a single square packet. She closed her fingers around it and held it high as she marched back into the room. "I found one."

His gaze met hers with such heated desire, she stilled. With a quick glance, she noted his cock standing straight out from his body, his chest rising with each breath and the hunger in his gaze. She'd inspired that reaction.

A tanned hand patted the blanket. "Bring your sweet body here."

As she crossed the floor, a sense of pride filled her movements and put a sway in her hips. Another sensation her science books omitted. She went down on her knees and he rose to meet her, their bodies mere inches apart. Her time away had done nothing to diminish his erection. An impressive erection. Unable to resist, she slid her hand along the underside of his penis and cupped his scrotum.



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Brady hissed out his breath and anchored hands on her shoulders. “Don’t stop.”

With gentle movements, she rolled his balls inside their sack with one hand and closed the fingers of her other around his shaft.

He thrust forward and let out a breath that ground into a rasp.

Using alternating movements, Kyra stroked the length of his cock with both hands, curling her fingers around the capped head. Watching the shaft pulse and feeling the heat sent tingles through her body, making her juices dampen her labia again.

Brady’s grip tightened and he tossed back his head. His hips rocked, sliding his cock against her strokes. The cords in his neck tightened.

Fascinated with the feel of silky skin and steely muscle, Kyra watched his penis redden and a drop of liquid ooze from the slit in the rounded tip. With her thumb, she spread the pearly pre-cum around the head. “So soft.”

Curiosity about something she’d read crossed her thoughts. She bent her head low. With anticipation rising, she stuck out her tongue and swiped it around his cock’s smooth head, then tasted the tang of his essence. *Mmm, musky.*

She flicked her tongue around the head, then closed her mouth around the end, slipping her lips over the ridge. *Absolutely delicious.* With a slow slide, she lowered her head, taking his thick heat deep into her mouth.

A low groan erupted from Brady’s throat, and he flipped

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her onto her back. In an instant, his lips captured hers in a hot, wet kiss. His tongue thrust in rhythm with the movements of his groin against her hip. His hands touched her everywhere—stroking her hair, tweaking her nipple, then brushing along her stomach to tangle in her damp curls.

Emotions threatening to sweep her away, she grabbed his shoulders and tilted her head so he could deepen the kiss. A knee nudged between her thighs, and she wrapped a leg around his, angling her body so she could rub her mons against him. A shiver swept over her skin, tightly beading her nipples, and she moaned, “Oh, Brady.”

His fingertip slid the length of her cleft and teased a lazy circle around her clit.

Tingles ran along her skin, and her body jerked. She arched and pressed herself against his finger, feeling her juices flow. “More.”

He chuckled, pressing a finger inside, slipping it out and inserting a second one. “What step are we on here, Kyra?”

“Step?” Her thoughts were gone, swept away in a haze of sense and emotion. She swallowed hard. “I’ve lost track.”

“And why is that?” He flicked a thumb across her swollen bud and sucked hard on her neck.

Her blood thrummed at his heated kiss. “Because,” she panted, unable to put coherent words to her feelings, “I don’t care. Brady, I just want you.”

His lips plundered hers, tasting and sucking. At the same time, his lower body moved away.

A protest from deep in her soul caught in her throat. She

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reached to pull him back, but he'd moved out of reach.

The rip of tearing foil sounded, and Brady sheathed himself with protection. A grin spread across his lips as he covered her body with his and ran a caressing hand down her leg. With a touch at her left knee, he pulled up her leg until her heel touched her hip. Then he stroked her opening with the head of his cock.

Her dewy moisture eased his entrance, and she sighed at the sensation of his cock stretching and filling her.

Then he stopped. "Look at me, Kyra."

She connected with his smoldering blue gaze, and heat flooded her bloodstream. None of the books ever mentioned the feeling of attachment that accompanied the interaction. With a jolt of surprise, she realized how much she wanted this man for her own. And not just for tonight.

"Let me see your eyes." With an unhurried thrust, he claimed her. "I want you to know who is making love to you. And for what reason."

He pulled away and plunged back inside, burying his cock deep into her channel.

A gasp of surprise puffed out. She grabbed his sides and held tight, intent on matching him move for move. With a roll of her hips, she rubbed her clit against the wiry curls at the base of his cock. The rough hair abraded her sensitive bud, and a shiver ran through her. A delicious sensation. She couldn't hold back a moan. "I know who you are, Brady Keegan. And I know who I'm making love with."

"Ah, Kyra." His thrusts increased in tempo, and he braced

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a hand near her head. "I've waited a long time for this."

Ragged breathing filled the air as they strained toward climax. Hands stroked and caressed aroused skin.

She rubbed her cheek against his wrist and lifted her hips with each thrust, the heavy sensation in her clit spiraling upward. Part of her brain classified every move, sound and smell for later review, and the other part moved on pure enjoyment of this wonderful act. "Brady, I'm so close."

"Okay, love." He reached a hand between them and rubbed his thumb on her clit, flexing his hips. His kisses rained along her jaw and down her neck.

Need tightened her insides and sent shivers racing along her skin. With each of his deep thrusts, her breath caught in her throat. She pressed her pussy against his hand, heightening the sensation created by his thick cock plunging deep inside.

His mouth captured hers, his tongue invading with long, sensuous thrusts that mirrored those of his lower body. Warm fingers stroked the underside of her breast, and a roughened thumb pad rubbed circles on her nipple.

Wave after wave of completion overtook her, and she clasped her arms around his neck. He was her anchor in the onslaught of pure physical sensation flooding her body.

Brady pumped several more times, then stiffened and let out a throaty groan before collapsing.

His heart thumped so hard against his chest, she could feel it. With languid movements, she stroked his back and ran her fingers through his damp hair. Her tongue lapped at his neck, and she tasted salt and Brady.

## WAGER OF SEDUCTION

So, this was what her colleagues meant when they talked about the afterglow of making love. This sensation of one's body being transformed into pudding and having no control over your own muscles.

*Control!* She nudged his shoulder. "Hey, Brady."

He mumbled something totally unintelligible.

She couldn't hold back a grin. "I won the bet."

He raised his head and frowned. "How do you figure that?"

Her hand rested on his chest, and the urge to playfully tug a few hairs was irresistible. "You didn't stay submissive. You took control of the situation." Secretly, she was glad he had, but didn't want to admit it aloud. A bet was a bet. "So, you lose."

"That's where you're wrong, Kyra." A grin spread across his lips, and the skin around his eyes crinkled with amusement. "I won. I made love to you, and that's exactly what I was betting on." He sealed his proclamation with a long kiss.

Minutes later, Kyra broke away to catch her breath. "And I've got more data for my experiment."

Brady stiffened, and his blue eyes turned steely and intense. "Data? Is that all this meant to you?"

With a single finger, she traced the furrows between his brows and gave him a seductive smile. "Of course not." Gazing at him from under lowered lids, she arched and rubbed her nipples across his chest. "Now I'm betting you can't do it again."

## *WAGER OF SEDUCTION*

“Another bet?” He chuckled, his hands tightening on her waist. “You’re on. In light of your research, why not relocate to the balcony?”

She gasped. “Outside?”

A fingertip swirled in smaller circles around the end of her breast, closing in on the tip. “This is just taking your premise one step further. I thought scientists were always interested in research.” He leaned down and closed his mouth over her nipple, swirling his tongue around the nub, until it tightened into a hard nub.

With shivers running over her skin, she grabbed his head and held him close. “Research...is...good.” Her breath escaped in short huffs.

He kissed the tip of her nipple and lifted his head, lips spread into a rakish smile. “I also noticed a tendency toward exhibitionism.”

With a fingertip tracing the bulges of his pecs, she glanced up, but couldn’t hold his gaze. The thrill she’d experienced had been a revelation.

“What you enjoy is okay.” He hooked a finger under her chin and made her meet his gaze. “Don’t believe anything else.”

Warmth at his acceptance shot through her and her chest tightened. Their connection was finally happening, but she wasn’t about to ruin it by putting words to her budding feelings. That experience would be saved for another day. A day she was ninety-nine percent sure would come.

Instead, she shoved herself upright and looked down at the

## *WAGER OF SEDUCTION*

gorgeous man sprawled on the blanket, letting her gaze drift over his muscled body. “The balcony you say?”

He scooted to where he leaned against the couch and settled his arms over his chest. “That’s right.”

She took slow steps, running hands along her hips and around to her ass, enjoying the soothing sensation. Knowing he watched put a swing in her step as she crossed to the sliding door. With a hand resting on the doorjamb, she looked over her shoulder. “Coming?”

“In a minute.” He grinned and linked his fingers behind his head. “Feel free to start without me.”

## LAYLA CHASE

Layla Chase writes contemporary stories as well as historicals and is published in short romantic fiction. Years spent in the business world prompted her to seek out her more creative side. There, she discovered all sorts of characters whose stories she needed to share. A native of California, she now lives in Texas with her husband and the youngest of her three children.

\* \* \*

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